



FLORIDA PLAN FOR EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Speaker of the House Will Weatherford and Senate President Don Gaetz sent a letter on July 17, 2013 to then-Education Commissioner Tony Bennett recommending that the state remove itself from testing associated with a transition to the new Common Core State Standards. The two legislative leaders wrote that they had serious concerns about the progress being made by the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for Colleges and Careers (PARCC). The leaders stated, “It is our view that Florida should withdraw immediately from PARCC in favor of a Florida Plan for valid, reliable and timely testing of student performance, including assessments for the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards.” The Governor directed the Commissioner of Education to withdraw as fiscal agent for PARCC on September 23, 2013. Florida gave up its role as the fiscal agent for the PARCC testing consortium on December 31, 2013 and the Florida Department of Education (DOE) has selected a new assessment that will accurately reflect the standing of our students according to the standards we have set.

The House has passed HB 7031, which will remove the references in Florida Statutes to the Common Core standards. These references were placed in law last year when our state was on a different path. We have changed course, and the statutes are being amended to add more generic references to standards and to statewide, standardized assessments. The intent is to make clear that Florida’s standards and assessments are tailored to our state.

State Standards and Assessment

The DOE recently completed the review and analysis of more than 14 hours of public hearings and 19,000 comments received during last year’s public review process of the Florida Standards in English language arts and mathematics. DOE, along with a group made up of Florida teachers and subject area experts, has crafted 98 changes and additions to the standards based on the public input. The State Board of Education adopted the revised standards at its February 18 meeting.

These changes and additions to the standards are being made to tailor Florida’s education system to the needs of Florida’s students. They include 46 changes to English language arts and mathematics standards and 52 new calculus standards. There are a number that make technical changes, clarifying existing standards or moving certain concepts from one grade to another. Others are more substantive, including amendments that deal with understanding measurements and currency calculations in math and specify that Florida students must continue to learn cursive writing. Once the standards are in place, DOE will select the optimal standardized assessment or assessments to measure student performance.



Representative Steve Crisafulli, Majority Leader

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The Governor directed DOE to establish Florida's next assessment based on a set of prescribed guidelines. In October 2013, DOE issued an Invitation to Negotiate to procure the assessment. Five companies responded to Florida's solicitation, PARCC was not one of them. A thorough review of the applications was made by the DOE. The Education Commissioner chose the non-profit American Institutes for Research to develop the statewide assessment. The newly selected assessment will be administered in the spring of 2015.

Student Data Security

As a part of the student data security review ordered by the Governor, all systems with student personal identifiable information have been identified and reviewed for security risks. The report lists suggested changes to the Florida Statutes to ensure student security and several general recommendations for proposed legislation. Some examples of these recommendations include a notice to parents and students of rights and a prohibition on the collection of biometric information. CS/HB 195 by Representative Raburn relating to Education Data Privacy, which codifies the commissioner's recommendations regarding students' information, has passed through three committees of reference. This bill outlines which information may or may not be collected and prohibits the disclosure of confidential and exempt education records.

School Accountability System

On February 18, Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart presented to the State Board of Education recommendations to provide stability and clarity to the school accountability system during the transition to a new assessment. The Commissioner recommended there be no changes to the current school grading system during the transition except those currently directed by existing statute or State Board of Education rule. The Commissioner presented her recommendations to the Education Committee on February 20, and the DOE is working collaboratively with the Legislature on the transition to a simplified, more transparent school grading system designed to support Florida's public school students using the new Florida Standards. The Education Committee has put forward HB 7117 which will improve the school grading process by making the grades clearer and less complicated.

Teacher Evaluations

DOE is working collaboratively with the Legislature to successfully implement teacher evaluations with the new standards and assessments and clarify options for locally-determined district student assessments to ensure best choices for students and relevance for teachers. In recognition of districts that are showing success, DOE wants to provide them with flexibility in deciding a portion of the student outcome data included in the evaluation. Teacher evaluations are addressed as a part of HB 7117 by the Education Committee.



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Messaging Points:

- The Legislative leadership was among the first to state that Florida should withdraw immediately from PARCC.
- The proposed standards are designed to equip Florida's students to be college and career ready upon graduation from high school.
- The changes to the standards are tailored to the educational needs of Florida's students.
- The new assessment will accurately reflect the standings of our students according to the standards we have set.
- The security of Florida's student-specific data will be safeguarded.
- Teacher evaluations will fairly reflect individual job performance, including, in part, the academic growth and performance of each teacher's students.



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